

***The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry**

Summary

The story centers around a young married couple, Jim and Della, who are very poor but deeply love each other. With Christmas approaching, both want to give the other a special gift, but they have little money to spend.

Della decides to sell her long, beautiful hair to a wig-maker in exchange for \$20. With this money, she buys a fine silver chain for Jim's prized pocket watch, which is the most valuable thing he owns. Meanwhile, Jim sells his watch to buy Della a set of combs for her hair.

On Christmas Eve, they exchange their gifts, only to realize the sacrifices they've made. Jim no longer has the watch to go with the chain, and Della no longer has her hair to use the combs. Despite the irony, the couple is filled with love for each other, showing the selflessness and sacrifice that true love entails.

The story concludes by comparing them to the Magi (the wise men from the Nativity story), who also gave valuable gifts in their own way. O. Henry suggests that the couple's sacrifices are even greater, symbolizing the true meaning of love and generosity.

Q& A

1. Question: What is the main theme of *The Gift of the Magi*?

Answer:

The main theme of *The Gift of the Magi* is selfless love and sacrifice. The story highlights how Jim and Della, despite their poverty, are willing to make personal sacrifices in order to give meaningful gifts to each other. The narrative emphasizes the idea that true love involves giving without expecting anything in return and is more valuable than material possessions.

2. Question: How do Jim and Della show their love for each other?

Answer:

Jim and Della demonstrate their love for each other through selfless acts of sacrifice. Della sells her long hair to buy a chain for Jim's pocket watch, and Jim sells his pocket watch to buy a set of combs for Della's hair. Both are willing to part with their most prized possessions in order to give something meaningful to the other, showing that their love is greater than material things.

3. Question: What is the irony in the story?

Answer:

The irony in *The Gift of the Magi* lies in the fact that Jim and Della sacrifice their most valuable

possessions to buy gifts for each other, only for their gifts to be considered useless. Della buys a silver chain for Jim's watch, but Jim sells his watch to buy combs for Della's hair, which she has already sold. This creates an ironic twist where their love and sacrifices are highlighted, but the gifts themselves lose their intended purpose.

4. Question: How do the characters of Jim and Della reflect the qualities of the Magi?

Answer:

At the end of the story, the narrator compares Jim and Della to the Magi, who were wise men who gave valuable gifts to the newborn Jesus. Although Jim and Della's gifts are not practical or valuable in the conventional sense, their selflessness and sacrifice make them "wise" in the narrator's eyes. They embody the true spirit of giving, as the Magi did, by giving out of love and devotion rather than material wealth.

5. Question: How does the setting contribute to the mood of the story?

Answer:

The setting of the story—a poor, modest apartment in a city—emphasizes the couple's financial struggles and their humble lifestyle. The Christmas Eve setting also adds a sense of urgency and emotional depth, as the couple desperately wants to give meaningful gifts despite their lack of money.

6. Question: What is the significance of the title *The Gift of the Magi*?

Answer:

The title *The Gift of the Magi* refers to the gifts given by the Wise Men (Magi) to the baby Jesus in the Nativity story. In the context of the story, the title is symbolic because, like the Magi, Jim and Della give precious gifts. However, unlike the Magi's gifts, which were practical, Jim and Della's gifts are made valuable by their love and sacrifice, rather than their material worth. The title highlights the deeper meaning of giving and the spirit of selflessness in their actions.

7. Question: What does the story suggest about materialism and love?

Answer:

The story suggests that love is more important than material wealth or possessions. Jim and Della are willing to give up their most valuable possessions to make each other happy, demonstrating that the value of a gift lies in the love and sacrifice behind it, not its material worth. The story critiques materialism by showing how true happiness comes from selflessness and emotional connection rather than the accumulation of material goods.